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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the theoretical and methodological basis for adult education is always somewhere between history, the present, and an orientation toward the future. The key questions that must be addressed when predicting the future of education are related to the following areas: determining how to overcome the restraints that are imminent to past and present; identifying those factors that have significant repercussions for education in the future; determining what adult education should be, both in terms of the development of every individual and the development of society at the macro and micro levels. The tendency in analyzing adult education's development in the future is to tie adult education to current factors of social development, particularly those derived from technological development. The different languages, cultures, traditions, ideologies, and economies existing in different countries are often viewed as barriers to cooperation in the theoretical and methodological convergence of adult education and its practical performance. However, it may be argued that the principle of globalization can be applied in the area of adult education more than in any other field of human activity and that the aforesaid differences should be considered motivations rather than barriers to cooperation in the area of adult education. (MN)

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Adult Education Between Past and Present Restraints and Future Prospects

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ADULT EDUCATION BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT RESTRAINTS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Whenever theoretical and methodological basis for any phenomenon, especially social ones, are speculated, it is necessary to touch upon the question of history of the same, its present and the development in future. After all, the aim of science is, to put it simply, to describe and explain any phenomenon that is included within a particular subject matter. Any science should reflect upon and analyse the process of the development of a phenomenon in the past and in the present (descriptive, explicative and explorative problem) and anticipate conditions of the development of the phenomenon in the future (prognostic, prosperous and futuristic problem). That is especially relevant for the adult education phenomena and for educational phenomena in general.

Analysis of theoretical and methodological basis for adult education is always somewhere in between history, present and orientation towards future. The orientation arises from the nature of educational phenomena, which mix elements of historical and social contexts of the phenomena and factors that caused them; interweave the idea of what they are today and of what they could become in future. Educational phenomena can always be characterised as " future which has already begun" because education in general, and especially adult education, is oriented towards future. History of the phenomena and their historical and traditional context instructs and informs us how to observe their present development and how to plan the future. Information and ideas about educational phenomena are always in a form of "true justified belief" or "knowledge about ignorance", that is "misapprehension valid for a certain time". The condition of truthfulness, the basic assumption for any knowledge and scientific cognition was never an issue. Disputes arise when we want to determine what constitutes truthfulness (corespondent, coherent, semantic and other forms of truthfulness), what criteria do we apply to a statement and what we mean by correspondence and coherence of a statement. Even though, speaking from the aspect of their epistemological truthfulness, knowledge about educational phenomena are in accordance with reality (they are correspondent), still very complicated issues arise dealing with the meaning of the term "correspondence of truthfulness of knowledge", understanding of reality and what are the criteria for truthfulness of cognition and

information about education. That restraint is not specific only for knowledge about education (it can be applied to other phenomena), and it can be an advantage and a chance to check a statement, knowledge of education in the past and today for the future. It is the diversity of social and historical context and today's context of knowledge about education, and especially adult education, and the actual practice - the educational act, that can be a chance to affirm information and experience about adult education and education in general. Similarly, P. Freire viewed education as cultural action for freedom, for man's emancipation and emancipation of communities, in which he works and lives. Even though similar statements and concepts of education and adult education have or may have constant dimension of meaning, they are in some contexts, contextually dependant. These concepts and statements can be taken as a start for various interpretations, and for their integration into systems of different cultural and traditional milieus in which they reify in practical modalities of educational act performance, especially in adult education.

2. HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE IN EDUCATION

There is no question about past, present and future overlapping in education, regardless of the way the essence of the phenomena is understood. However there is the question how to overcome restraints that are imminent to past and present, question about understanding and performance of the phenomena (educational act), and about what has significant repercussions on the education in future. By this we refer to such future of education that is based on the genuine nature, either of a child or of an adult, on his search for personal identity, on his need to live and create his own personal future and the future of society. It is very important not to fall into delusion of "enlightening optimism" or into delusion that future (and present) is solved by technological rationality. Another misconception is that the question of man's existence and his formation are taken as his, either long-term or short-term adaptation to society and technological changes. Education, as a creative activity, leaves "in itself", "behind itself" and in perspective, its inner logic and "its necessity". This logic, however, is not declared as some kind of an "immanent law" applied to necessity as a chain of events in development of a phenomenon. In these terms, ideas of Tofler, Rifkin, and Borell are interesting. They believe that key issues of the future

are not about material well being and economical prosperity, but instead how to find the meaning of life of a free person who will create the future, rather than be a passive observer of "oncoming future". Education plays an extremely important role in that "mission". After all, term *"humanitas"*, especially in European context, has always been closely related to term *"education"*. In that concept, education ("Education", "Bildung") takes the central place of the man's identification of his "humanity" and generally of the idea of "humanisation" of the man as a cultivated and (trans)formed person. In that context a man is seen as a *"neoton topos"*, who is, in his logos, an autonomous, free and creative being. Education which recognises the ideal of "a man's self" as a basis of humanistic identification, should be set up in the core the anthropological role that recognises man's potentials and represents the development potential of the society at the same time. Education in itself has the unity of achievement in acts of thinking and performing. On the verge of the European civilisation an idea developed according to which the meaning of education is to help a man by conscious insight in his "self" of essence and existence, "good that is imminent to him as an individual" (Brida, M, 1996.). Even within that theory a split has developed. In paradigmatical sense, knowledge stays on one side, while virtue (goodness) remains on the other. In that sense the meaning of education concentrates on the act the basis of which is interference between "the knowledge and the good". Image of human being has changed throughout the history and became almost unrecognisable in numerous possibilities of today. Without shaping his historical place in turbulent time and unrecognisable space, without articulation of what is referred to as "the meaning of human essence and existence", educational act cannot be viewed with optimism, to put it the way Bloch did, "even when we feel most cheerful". Education becomes devoid of content; it doesn't have its foothold. Educational purpose is split into two pieces: the knowledge and the power to act, in which these two are first equalised in the metaphysical, and then in the empirical and scientific sense. Not only that knowledge and other effects of the educational act are no longer tightly connected with the standards of man, they are not an issue of inner man; they are a "mean", "function", "usable expedient", in which education is determined by a new dimension to discover field of power – ideology. And that is the essence of the educational crisis in the same measure. There are some basic questions arising: how should one on the basis of educational notions and experience from the past and the present presume the development of education in the future. Mainly,

these are the questions about what will happen to development of education, what will this education be and what should it be in certain hypothetical situations in the future.

In predicting the future of education, study should be directed to determine, as precisely as possible, what kind of education will exist in the future, with all the limitations that the past and the present of these phenomena bring in that respect. Of course, it is not possible to avoid the question: what should education look like? In studying the future of education this involves us in the process of designing education in the future. One should be careful with this, especially in a sense that predicting education in the future does not combine pseudo-scientific and normative approach, in the process of which scientific statements and norms turn into inviolable dogmas. And anyway, there is a small step from normativism to dogmatism. In overcoming the differences of the past, present and future in education, it is necessary to take into consideration all the possibilities offered by logic of continuity and analogy. In that respect, educational phenomena are no exception. These phenomena, at least on the global level, follow the logic of continuous development, so their developmental tendencies may be derived by using the logic of analogy (on the basis of common characteristics, traits and labels). However, analogy and continuity suggest possible, not certain direction of occurrence and development of a phenomenon. Concluding about the future development of some phenomenon on the basis of its development so far is challenging but also ungrateful job, full of risks and surprises. It is so simple because significant turns are possible (and very likely) in that respect, through which the future of education emerges as a mirror image of the past and the present in a distorted mirror whose parameters of distortion are not even known. This is why in predicting the future education one also relies on more complex and sophisticated methods such as the methods of systematic and structural research. They allow more complex and comprehensive selection of components and subcomponents of education and those factors that cause or may cause the development of these phenomena in the future. There are also the methods of modelling pedagogic and andragogic phenomena and processes, "the methods of intuition" and "the scenario of the future", through which the researches are being involved in "designing the desirable future of education". Since the study of the future of education demands inclusion of the totality of educational phenomena and processes in its global nature and growth, it is necessary to, among the components and factors of conditioning of these phenomena, take into consideration alternative approaches, to establish different

connections and relations and the functioning of the same in various aspects and variations so that different hypothetical models of future education may be designed.

3. ADULT EDUCATION AS A CHANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIETY

Adult education as a phenomenon and as a human practice has all the features of the educational phenomena. All the characteristics resulting from the socio-historical and the current context as the presumptions and factors of future education are broken into pieces in adult education. Adult education from the future aspect is also specific in relation to other educational phenomena and processes in that this segment of education is directed towards adults who create both the future of the society and their personal future, make decisions about it, but at the same time decide on the future of the young, of those that yet need to "step" into the "coming future". In this way adults take responsibility for the future of the young, often offering it as "the promised future". On the other hand, in the context of lifelong learning adult education always seems like "the commenced future", like something directed towards future. In forming adult education in near or far future, two questions are crucial: the first one refers to the natural need and aspiration of an adult to those educational goods which will contribute to self-realisation to satisfy his/her individual needs and interests, to become what he/she is not but would like to be. The second question refers to what adult education should be, both in the development of every individual and the society on micro and macro level, i.e. to what will happen in the future. In that respect, adults live in the present, although they think about their future and the future of the young (they often even usurp the rights of young people to shape their own future). In relation to that, it is necessary to raise the question of the rights of the adults, the question of legitimacy of their efforts to shape and plan the future. In this respect, there are many psychological and anthropological questions raised: how can adult education contribute to our understanding of the sense of the future for the young and adults, how can it become the source of knowledge and insights about what people are, about their basic needs and abilities? Adult education (within the scope of the life-long learning) should abandon the logic according to which education is a function of society, or better, the very image, the mirror of society. Instead, it should shift its focus (of course, more in practice than in theory) to the

principle adopted long time ago - "education is a factor of the development of society". This shift of focus in understanding education and adult education as the factors of the development of society by no means implies that education should be directed towards contributing to the growth and development of society, regardless the fact that it (education) is designed to fulfil its anthropological essence, to meet the adults' needs, interests and abilities to acquire knowledge, insights and values which contribute to their (adults') humanisation and improvement. It is necessary to emphasise that because the compensatory, social function of adult education emerges as central in all the contexts. Consequently, adult education seems to be too concentrated on educating adults with the purpose of facilitating their adaptation to the rapid changes on both technological and social levels. At the same time, it (adult education) is not focused enough on fulfilling the various individual needs of the adults - the needs for educational 'products', which enable them to seek their own identity, and the needs to live their own present and future as well as the present and future of society. In that regard, our preoccupation with the future should intensify our conscience and consciousness of the problems which are relevant today and could be multiplied in the future. When analysing the development of adult education in the future, we may notice the tendency to tie adult education to some current factors of social development, more particularly to those derived from the technological development (from the first, second or any other technological wave) and based on informatical, communicational, globalizational, environmental and other elements brought by the present accompanied by the past. Consistently with the trends of the development, these elements should be incorporated into the adult education system. It is the conventional wisdom that if you do not follow the development of these elements and do not include them in the education system today, tomorrow will be late. It is difficult to say that this widespread logic, which also offers itself as an imperative, is wrong. Adult education follows that logic "blindly". Nevertheless, it appears that adult education, among other things, has a task of warning people of the dangers brought on by the technological development as well as a task of rendering people capable of thinking differently about the alternative ways, instead of satisfying themselves with the technological reasoning that human problems can be solved by the short-term predictions of the social changes, which are better at blurring the real state of things than at opening new vistas in the future. In the modern world, adult education assumes greater importance every day. Education, within the scope of the

life-long learning, is being constantly prolonged. We have every right to say that today higher education has the status primary education had in the 19th c. And not only that. The need for specialised knowledge and skills prolongs the educational process that then continues in the sphere of adult education. Knowledge, skills and other educational "goods" necessary for the professional activity and leisure time are becoming increasingly acquired through various forms of informal education during the working process and directly by different forms of self-education. Adult education within the scope of the life-long learning becomes 'the ground' for solving not only the questions of education concerning the acquisition of professional competence, but also the social questions: how to create a model of education which will contribute to a very complex aim – to the quality of life of every individual in the changing world. Consequently, adult education is a point of interest for politicians, governments, governmental and nongovernmental institutions, specialists and scientists, because it is believed that those who govern education and adult education will govern the future. But it can be said with certainty that the only constant in adult education are changes. The direction of these changes and the way in which they will be induced remain to be seen. Adult education in the modern world is conditioned by the numerous differences and factors, which have a very important role in determining its development in particular parts of the world, particular countries and even particular regions of the countries. Adult education, as well as the other forms of education, is determined by historical, cultural, ideological, political, economic, social, technological and other differences. Consequently, there are differences in the theoretical and methodological foundations, in the degree and quality of the scientific and theoretical studies of various problems belonging to the domain of andragogical theory and practice; there is a different 'philosophy', different basis and level of development of adult education regarding aims, contents and models of performance. Therefore, it is possible only to talk about some global trends in the development of adult education even among the countries, which have similar historical, cultural and economic trends of development.

All these and many other differences, which affect adult education on the level of the scientific theory as well as on the level of andragogical theory and practice, are regarded as barriers in uniting the andragogical theory and practice. In the area of adult education more than in any other field of human activity, the principle of globalisation can be applied. Every society and every nation has its achievements in

the domain of adult education. One should not be prejudiced in that respect. Even those with ' modest achievements' may be of use to those with 'great achievements'.

In conditions of constant globalisation of communications, different languages, cultures and traditions as well as ideological, economic and other differences should not be barriers but rather the motivation for co-operation in theoretical and methodological convergence of adult education and its practical performance in which adult education will be the factor of the development of both individuals and the society.

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